

# ***NEWS***

*From the Office of*

## **Brad Mitzelfelt**

Supervisor, First District  
San Bernardino County

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### **Mitzelfelt Supports Overview of Solar Energy Projects**

SAN BERNARDINO – With dozens of solar energy projects that would cover hundreds of square miles proposed for the Mojave Desert, San Bernardino County First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt expressed relief that the Federal Government is going to look at the potential impacts of solar energy development in the West.

“In the rush toward development of alternative energy, the impacts on our public lands have been overlooked by policymakers in Washington, D.C., who tend to view our precious desert as a wasteland ripe for exploitation. This review will give us a chance to look at the total effect of all these projects and make some decisions about where they are appropriate and where they should be restricted,” said Mitzelfelt, whose district includes much of the Mojave Desert.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the Department of Energy announced this week they will prepare a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement on solar energy development on BLM land in six Western states. A Programmatic EIS takes a broad look at the total environmental effects across a huge area.

Most encouraging to Mitzelfelt is the moratorium on new applications for solar projects. The 125 existing applications that could cover 1 million acres, or more than 1,500 square miles, will continue to be processed.

“I do remain concerned about projects already in the pipeline that will continue to be processed,” added Mitzelfelt.

“At a time when the desert has become smaller because of urban growth, set-asides for habitat and wilderness, and expansion of military bases, we cannot surrender huge areas of public land without a serious discussion about which resources we can sacrifice and which need to be protected,” said Mitzelfelt.

The environmental review will not cover wind energy. A similar document on wind was completed in 2006 but did not address California issues in detail.

"I strongly encourage the Federal Government to step back and also look at wind energy development in the Southern California desert area," he said. "The wind projects, with turbines more than 400 feet tall, could forever destroy the vistas that residents and visitors love."

The County and BLM recently approved an agreement that calls for joint environmental review of wind and solar projects in the County.

Scoping hearings, in which the public may identify issues that should be covered in the environmental review, will be held:

June 16, 6 p.m.  
Courtyard by Marriott, Riverside  
1510 University Ave  
Riverside Ca, 92507

June 17, 2006, 6 p.m.  
City of Barstow Chamber of Commerce  
220 East Mountain View  
Barstow, CA 92311

For information, go to <http://solareis.anl.gov/>.